

SPECIFICATION AMENDMENTS

On page 1, above line 1, insert--Priority Claim

The present application claims priority on European Patent Application 03250242.9 filed 15 January 2003; European Patent Application 03250243.7 filed 15 January 2003 and European Patent Application 03076196.9 filed 24 April 2003.--

Paragraph on page 1, line 1, has been amended as follows:

-- The present invention relates to a wellstring assembly for use in a well extending downwardly from the earth's surface. In a particular aspect the invention relates to a well-drilling bit assembly suitable for performing ~~a~~ ~~an operation in a well ahead of the well-drilling bit~~ ("through-bit operation").--

Paragraph on page 3, line 24, has been amended as follows:

US ~~Pat.~~ ~~patent publication~~ No. 3 554 304 discloses a well-drilling bit with cutter elements that are lowered on a conventional wireline with overshot through the drill pipe and locked to the lower end of the drill pipe by a latching mechanism. The wireline can be pulled back to surface and lowered again to reconnect to the cutter element. For removing the cutter elements to surface, the latching mechanism is released by simply pulling the wireline.--

On page 4, delete line 1-9.

On page 4, after line 10, insert the following paragraph:

-- It is an object of the present invention to provide a wellstring assembly that allows access to the well outside of the wellstring via a latching mechanism, and which allows robust and fail-safe operation. It is a particular object to provide a well-drilling bit assembly suitable for through-bit operation, which allows robust and fail-safe operation of

the connections between the closure element and the bit body and between the closure element and the auxiliary tool.--

Paragraph on page 5, line 12, has been amended as follows:

-- The present invention starts from the insight that the auxiliary tool has to perform two functions. On the one hand First, the auxiliary tool needs to be connected to the second (lower) wellstring part. On the other hand Secondly, the wellstring-interconnecting means (e.g. a bit connecting means which connects the closure element to the bit body) needs to be operated so as to disconnect the wellstring parts from each other. It was further realized that the robustness of the manipulation of the second wellstring part (e.g. the closure element) using the auxiliary tool can be increased, if the two functions of the auxiliary tool are decoupled from each other in a specific way, so that the wellstring-interconnecting means can only be operated when the auxiliary tool is connected to the second wellstring part. In this way it is prevented that the second wellstring part can be lost in the wellbore, since it can only be disconnected from the upper first wellstring part if it is fully connected to the auxiliary tool. When the opening up of the wellstring is reversed, after an operation in the open wellbore has been performed, the auxiliary tool can only be removed when the wellstring parts are properly interconnected again.--

On page 34, after line 5, insert the following paragraph:

-----While the illustrative embodiments of the invention have been described with particularity, it will be understood that various other modifications will be readily apparent to, and can be easily made by one skilled in the art without departing from the spirit of the invention. Accordingly, it is not intended that the scope of the following claims be limited to the examples and descriptions set forth herein but rather that the claims be construed as encompassing all features which would be treated as equivalents thereof by those skilled in the art to which this invention pertains.--

On page 35, above line 1, insert: We claim: